No. 2. { Whole No 158 } *Price, 10 Cents. Per Annum, $3.00.* Vol. VII.

SATURDAY, SEPT. 30, 1871.

Subject: Unprofitable Servants.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

New-York:
J. B. FORD & CO., No. 27 PARK PLACE,
1871.

AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY, AGENTS FOR THE TRADE.
European Agents, SAMPSON LOW, SON, & MARSTON, Crown Buildings, 188 Fleet Street, London.
Sold by all Carriers and News Dealers

AUTHORIZATION.

Brooklyn, January, 1869.

Messrs. J. B. Ford & Co.:

Gentlemen: Mr. T. J. Ellinwood has been the reporter of my sermons for some ten years; and he is the only authorized reporter of them. The sermons which you are printing, week by week, from his hand, are published by you alone, and are the only ones for which I will consent to be responsible.

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

NOTICE.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT is the *only regular publication of* Mr. BEECHER'S *current sermons*—the one indorsed by his approval as correct, and sanctioned by his authority; it is well printed on good paper, in book form—being *suitable for binding and preservation*, (the advertisements at the back being easily removed;) and it is *cheap*—within the reach of all. The publishers have responded to the constant demand for a continued insertion of the Prayers, as one of the most profitable features of Mr. BEECHER'S ministrations, and the Scriptural lesson and hymns sung are also indicated, making a complete record of one service of Plymouth Church for each Sunday.

TERMS.—Single numbers, ten cents. Yearly subscription price, $3.00, giving two volumes of about 450 pages each. Half-yearly subscription price, $1.75. Subscriptions may begin with any number.

CLUB RATES, five copies for $12.00. Circulars giving List of Cash Commissions and Popular Premiums for Subscriptions sent free, on application to the publishers. Plymouth Pulpit and The Christian Union together for $5 per annum.

POSTAGE OF PLYMOUTH PULPIT to subscribers in the United States is twenty cents per year, payable quarterly, in advance, at the Post-Office to which the pamphlet is sent; and on single copies to England it is *four cents.*

PLYMOUTH PULPIT.

THIS publication began with the sermon of Sunday, September 20th, 1868, the first of the Church services for the year. Each *Volume* will contain twenty-six numbers, being one sermon each week for six months. The *First, Second,* and *Third* series are now issued; each making one large and handsome 8vo vol., extra cloth—Vol. I. being embellished with a new STEEL PORTRAIT of Mr. BEECHER—the best likeness of him ever published—Vol. II. having a fine large Interior View of Plymouth Church. Price, $2.50 per vol. *Sent post-paid by mail on receipt of price.*

CONTENTS OF VOLUME I.

I. The Duty of Using One's Life for Others. II. The God of Comfort. III. The Nobility of Confession. IV. Self-Control Possible to All. V. Pilate, and his Modern Imitators. VI. The Strong to Bear with the Weak. VII. Growth in the Knowledge of God. VIII. Contentment in all Things. IX. Abhorrence of Evil. X. Privileges of the Christian. XI. The Love of Money. XII. Divine Influence on the Human Soul. XIII. Moral Affinity, the True Ground of Unity. XIV. The Value of Deep Feelings. XV. Works Meet for Repentance. XVI. Malign Spiritual Influences. XVII. The Old and the New. XVIII. The Hidden Christ. XIX. Well-Wishing not Well-Doing. XX. Sphere of the Christian Minister. XXI. Suffering, the Measure of Worth. XXII. The Victory of Hope in Sorrow. XXIII. The Crime of Degrading Men. XXIV. Self-Conceit in Morals. XXV. Morality, the Basis of Piety. XXVI. The Trinity. XXVII. The Family, as an American Institution

CONTENTS OF VOLUME II.

I. The Way of Coming to Christ. II. Conduct, the Index of Feeling. III. The Sympathy of Christ. IV. Retribution and Reformation. V. Counting the Cost. VI. Scope and Function of a Christian Life. VII. Human Ideas of God. VIII. The Graciousness of Christ. IX. Evils of Anxious Forethought. X. The Beauty of Moral Qualities. XI. The Problem of Joy and Suffering in Life. XII. The Apostolic Theory of Preaching. XIII. The Right and the Wrong Way of Giving Pleasure. XIV. The Perfect Manhood. XV. Dissimulating Love. XVI. The Door. XVII. Moral Theory of Civil Liberty. XVIII. Peaceableness. XIX. Soul-Drifting. XX. The Hidden Life. XXI. Discouragements and Comforts in Christian Life. XXII. Hindrances to Christian Development. XXIII. Loving and Hating. XXIV. Authority of Right over Wrong. XXV. The Power of Love. XXVI. The Preciousness of Christ.

CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

I. Watchfulness. II. Paul and Demetrius. III. Consolations of the Suffering of Christ. IV. Treasure that Cannot be Stolen. V. Bearing, but not Overborne. VI. The Holy Spirit. VII. Ideal Standard of Duty. VIII. Faults. IX. The Comforting God. X. The Name Above Every Name. XI. National Unity. XII. Social Obstacles to Religion. XIII. Christ, the Deliverer. XIV. The God of Pity. XV. Sin Against the Holy Ghost. XVI. Inheritance of the Meek. XVII. Memorials of Divine Mercy. XVIII. The Victorious Power of Faith. XIX. The Peace of God. XX. Coming to One's Self. XXI. Fragments of Instruction. XXII. The Substance of Christianity. XXIII. Spiritu Blindness. XXIV. Perfect Peace. XXV. Preparation for Death. XXVI. Fidelity to Conviction.

ANY BACK NUMBERS CAN BE HAD.

THE CHRISTIAN UNION ($3.00) together with Marshall's Washington—and PLYMOUTH PULPIT will be sent to ONE ADDRESS for $5.00).

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1870, by J. B. FORD & CO., in the Office of the Librarian at Washington

UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS.

"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."—LUKE XVII., 10.

Not to dwell on other points connected with this utterance, there can be no doubt that these words of Christ put a far lower estimate upon human conduct and attainment than men are wont to do. When men have done their best, they are still to say, "We are worthless."

It is the complaint of many, that Christianity does not enough recognize the rights and dignity of human nature; that it assumes the monarchical idea, and undervalues man, that it may exalt the sovereignty and glory of God. But it is complained that, even more than the text of Scripture, preachers traduce human nature, and even revile it. Nor am I prepared to say that the accusation is altogether devoid of truth. I am not here to defend the utterances of all the men that have been called "preachers of the Gospel."

I do not propose to defend the doctrine of depravity as held in the church for ages past, nor to justify the teachings of ministers on the subject of human sinfulness. I propose, however, to develop to you such a conception of human character as shall satisfy you that the New Testament is not severe, is even merciful, in its representations. And in doing this I shall not argue by citing texts, since that is the very question in dispute—whether the Scriptures are correct in their representations. To quote them to vindicate themselves certainly is not good reasoning.

Nor shall I allege the sins and crimes of the human race; nor yet at all attempt to show you any of the positive evils that manifest themselves in human life. Contrariwise, I propose to show you how poor and imperfect are the best things in man, leaving you to infer, if the best is "unprofitable," what the rest must be, and what must be the grade of character.

I shall assume, then, that ordinary men are in the possession of

SUNDAY MORNING, NOV. 22, 1868. LESSON: MATT. VII., 13. HYMNS (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 255, 531, 889.

the most excellent virtues. I will not even dispute your moralities nor your virtues. I will not even dispute that you have *Christian* virtues. Indeed, this shall be the very starting-point. I will credit you with these, and we will examine them, and you in the light of them.

Any right views of the qualities of the human mind must carry with them three substantial elements—number, quality, and harmony.

Assuming, then, that ordinary men have good qualities, I remark: the excellencies of even the best men are seldom more than single good qualities; and they are not a corrected, completed and symmetrical whole. Even men who are known and praised as eminent in excellence, if you will analyze their character, shall be found to be nearly deficient in some points. And this is where the mantle of charity is brought in. We usually stretch the skirts of one good quality to cover the blank made by the absence of a dozen others; and men seldom have more than one or two salient points of character which men agree in calling *virtues*—virtues of any degree of eminence, at any rate. And usually the reverse of every excellence is wanting. In the natural order of the human mind, to every faculty there is its counterpoise. There are two poles of every single tendency. If there be justice, there is benevolence. If there be combativeness, there is its opposite. If there be a spirit of the ideal, there is the spirit of the practical. Ordinarily, men's excellencies are only on one pole, and the opposite is usually in deficiency.

According to whatever system you examine the contents of man's nature, you will be struck with the fact that his virtues are only single qualities—threads, not fabrics; letters, not a literature; not a consistent and connected chain in which every link is there, and every link is perfect, and every link is locked with its fellow. That is not the ordinary character, even of men who pass for very good men.

Thus, one man is bold, but he is not cautious, and is therefore continually running into rashness. His very boldness, while it inures to his benefit, is, in certain instances, constantly bringing him into trouble. A man is just; but then he is cold and stern. He utterly lacks tenderness, without which there cannot be any high and true divine justice. Or, the man is wild. In that case he is very likely not to be firm. The man is severe; but he is not merciful. He is merciful; and then he is tolerant, probably, of all manner of evil, and fails to see the sinfulness of sin. One is constant; but in order

to become constant, he is obliged to be obstinate. One is practical and efficient; but then he is not rich and large in spiritual thoughts. Another is large and fruitful in his spiritual nature; but then he is utterly unpractical and good for nothing so long as he is an inhabitant of this world. And so we are continually saying of men, "If only they had this or that; if to all their excellencies they could add something that would give them the command of those excellencies, how useful they would be!" Those that love most are obliged to say, "Well, but my husband is one of the most excellent men in the world, only" ——. Alas! that *only*. These monosyllabic utterances—what a world of experience is embodied in them! and how much they mean! If one is generous and kind, then you shall often find that he is quite lax in conscience. If he is genial, he is not pure. If he is careful and exact, he will be rigorous and uncharitable.

Each person, then, runs to specialties. One or two strong qualities usually stand out, and they are apt to stand out in excess.

This partialism begins in the very faculty; but, as might be expected, it leads on to a like practical partialism in outward life. One man is wise and good in his family, but he has no commensurate interest in the whole community. Another is a good citizen, but a meager friend. Another is admirable in business, but without affinity for sentiment. Another has fineness of taste, and grows toward all that is elegant in life, but then, he is neither broad nor robust nor practical.

And so we find that men are partialists, not in their beliefs alone, not in their tastes alone, but in the very radical idea of character, having single elements. Whereas, human character was made to be composite by a multitude of separate faculties, that all of them, organized together, might be in strength and in harmony. We see character actually developed, even among the best specimens in life, by rarely other than single excellencies here and there.

Consider, then, what your own observation among your friends will furnish you examples of. Examine the people about you in this particular matter, look at the excellencies of those persons whose excellencies are marked, and ask yourself, "Do I know of a person in whom I can find five clear, effulgent, distinct and positive virtues or faculties of eminence?" Begin at home; and if your modesty prevents your looking at yourself, your neighbor will do it for you thoroughly. Go on to the next, and to the next, and to the next, all around in the circle of your acquaintance—not among the heroes of your imagination; not among the persons who have a name of which you have formed some ideal, but among persons that

you know thoroughly—and see now many you can find that have more than a few scattered excellencies. Sift them, and see how much there is of chaff in them, and how much of wheat. Carry statistics rigorously into your examination of those around about you. I mean good men. I do not mean the fallen-down. Among the living men that you are willing to call your friends, when you come to think of it, how many are partialists in their very virtues!

Suppose the human soul were a great city—a commercial city, like New York—and imagine that every faculty, with all its issues, represented some department of business, and that you had come down to the soul-city to buy, and that you went for your wares from one faculty to another—from reason to the moral sentiments; from the moral sentiments to the affections; from one affection to another. Would you not find that in each particular case you might buy a few things in each man, but that for the greatest part of his faculties he had no stock of goods at all to sell, and nothing to look upon? Where can you find a man whose nature is such that you can go into it as into a mighty bazaar, and there find the precious jewels of spiritual life; there find moral sentiments like gold and precious metals; there find affections; there find all that intellect can give; there find all that these combined can give? Where can you find a nature in which you can see the traffic of universal virtue? Some such natures there are in poetry; but alas! poetry is a realm that can only be trodden by the feet of angels. Some there are in literature. Some there are in memorials. Some persons would lead us to suppose that they had this universal development of strength in each one of the great faculties of their nature. It is very easy in writing a man's life to give him a good character when he is dead and gone, and you cannot convict him. It is very easy to make perfect men out of dead men. But it is very hard to make perfect characters out of any men who are living. When a man is alive, how little do you suspect that he is what he is when you see him in the Sunday-school library! When you see a man in the street, or in the store, how little do you suspect that he is what he is when you see him in a religious biography, where he comes out with a perfect, full-orbed character! I am led, when I see what men are, to suspect the perfectness of what men have been. It is not according to the analogy of this world that men should be found to be perfect in more than one or two salient virtues. They are not symmetric.

The conclusion, then, with this view, is, that the excellencies of good men are frequently derived, not from their whole nature, but from single faculties. They are partialisms.

Besides, remember, we said there must be found in the organization of the character of every man the matter of quality. This is even more important than the last consideration—the quality of our excellencies. We are familiar with this term *quality* as it is applied to matter, to timber, to fabrics, to metals, to workmanship, to jewelry, to arts. A picture may be a picture; and yet its quality may be such as to rank it very low. Cloth may be cloth; and yet it may be made up of shoddy, and its quality may be very inferior. There may be such a thing as quality, too, in virtues. Men may have virtues; but their quality may be very low. This element of quality is recognized just as much in disposition as in physical things. In regard to sentiments, affections, or, as they are generally called, virtues, they ought to have these marks of quality: truth, largeness, continuity, universality, fruitfulness, fineness and beauty.

Now, examine the single virtues which we accredit to men. We have said that they are partialisms. But let us for the moment forget these, and take in all those qualities in which men do excel, and examine them. Are they strong and large? Do they impress you with a sense of amplitude, vigor, and outpouring fullness? Men have strength enough. See a man's enthusiasm when it is ambition. He has strength enough in that direction. But apply the test to moral quality. Has he strength in that? Let it be money, and all that money means, and see what a voluminous agent man is. There is no deficiency of vigor, nor of variety, nor of intensity, nor of fullness of power, then. You know what large-mindedness is in avarice. Or, let it be any of the lower forms, let it be revenge, let it be anger and indignation, and what a sense of vigor there is! "Be angry"—men are very busy obeying that; but they never think of the other half—"sin not."

If, now, you take a moral quality, where do you find any corresponding vigor, largeness, intensity, in it? Where do you find these qualities in beneficence, generosity, meekness, humility, patience, self-denial, in any of the higher virtues which bear intimate relation to the moral nature of man?

One of the most popular and best recognized of men's qualities is benevolence, in the various forms of generosity and liberality. And is not a man's benevolence very largely like a hunter's tinder-box. Traversing the wilderness in rain or in snow, he carries neither light nor warmth with him; but in his pocket he has his box with which, by dint of flint and steel, he can strike out sparks, which shall catch the tinder, and from which, by a good deal of pains, taking shelter, he can at last kindle a fire by which to cook his victuals or warm his meals. Is not the spirit of benevolence a thing by which,

as a man makes a fire with a tinder-box and flint and steel, one plies motives and instruments, until at last he comes to a fire large enough to answer some practical purpose? How many men, among even good men, do you find who have so much benevolence that it is automatic; that it is spontaneous; that it sheds its light over all? Where do you find men in whom benevolence is so positive and strong and fine that it is continuous and fruitful and beautiful? There are some single instances of such men, but they are rare enough for canonization. How far are men who are called benevolent, and who are susceptible of becoming benevolent on persuasion, from answering any such tests as those which are applied to the Christian character! Therefore it is that you find so much in the New Testament on the quality of moral governments.

"The Lord loveth a cheerful giver."

We are forbidden to give "grudgingly." And yet, how many persons who have the name of benevolence do give grudgingly. It is grudgingly that they give, whether what they give is money, or influence, or any other thing. It is solicited of them. They are not cheerful givers. How few men make their benefactions sweeter than flowers! How many men are there who, when you approach them for that which they have, or can command, meet you in a spirit which makes you admire not merely their benevolence, but the beauty and sweetness of it? How many of you ever solicit men from whom you turn away, saying, "He is a prince—he is a lordly nature." How many men are blessed in receiving your bounty? How many, on the other hand, are humbled, and go away feeling, "He has answered my request, to be sure; but he met me with so mean a spirit that I would rather never ask another favor of him in the world?" It is in the power of some men to say *no* to you so that it shall be filled with more blessings than the *yes* of other men.

How men's excellencies in this life fail when you come to examine their quality, and when you come to see what is their want of largeness, and delicacy, and sweetness, and continuity, and beauty! How little do they answer the royal portraiture that is given in the life of our blessed Saviour! Look at the fruit of the Spirit, as it is recounted in this memorable chapter—the 5th of Galatians:

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy."

There is not a single faculty that has not love and joy in it. How many faculties there are that act musically, lovingly, cheerily, inspiringly!

"The fruit of the Spirit is love [which is the supremest life], joy [the inevitable result of that life], peace."

Peace? Alas! peace has long ago disappeared. If there is any peace it is hoarded. We scarcely know it. Peace I think is more

blessed than joy. Peace is that quality which abides after love and joy have attuned the soul to ecstasy.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering."

How many have long-suffering? How many have the rudiments of it, even? Some men are long-suffering toward their children; they are less so toward their neighbors; and they are not at all so toward those who are outside of their circle. It is a rare and infrequent experience. It has neither continuity, nor universality, nor fruitfulness, nor fineness, nor beauty.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

It is said that against all these qualities there is no law. That is to say, where men have these faculties according to the Christian ideal, they are lifted up so far above the necessity of special rules of life, being a law unto themselves, that against them there cannot be a law framed. They fly higher than laws ever could.

There is one other test. I have spoken of quality. There is harmony, likewise. The distinctive characteristic of man is the complex organization of his mind—the union of many divine elements, balancing, restraining, inspiring and qualifying each other. If we examine in this direction, we shall find that character is poorer than in those directions in which we have already looked at it. The ruling faculties in men's minds have but very little commerce with their companions. I am accustomed to think of character as being indicated by the company which a man's faculties keep. I look at the best men, and I say to myself, "In these men conscience is predominant; but then, conscience only leavens half of their faculties. As the sun in the spring melts the snow on the south side of the fence, and leaves it untouched on the north side, where it lies long after the violets have blossomed on the south side, so I see it to be in the characters of men. The dominant faculties are dominant simply in their own sphere. Or, they touch the other faculties only a little. There are very few men who carry a conscience beyond a convention. Most men use their conscience as they have been taught to use it. They do not apply it to every single faculty from the base to the crown of their natures. It is very limited in its range, in its associations, in its partnerships with the other faculties of their mind.

Take the quality of ideality. How little does it go out of its own sphere! It was meant to be a leavening quality for every single moral element. The "beauty of holiness" is insisted upon in the Word of God. How little do we see of the beauty of holiness in actual Christian life! Beauty belongs to every single quality. We are apt to have beauty; but we buy it, in our raiment, in our fur-

niture, in our pictures. We buy it of the architect and of the artist. But man himself was made to be beautiful. There is a great artist-faculty in every single man which was meant to cast out its light so that words should be beautiful; so that all unconscious actions should be rounded out in the spirit of true beauty; so that all virtues should issue beautifully. But how seldom do we find men in whose faculties there is any such harmony!

Look at the feeling of benevolence, which was meant to have commerce with every part of the mind. Benevolence has a speaking acquaintance, I suppose, with almost all men's faculties, and that is all. It is intimate and visits in only one or two places in the minds of men.

If you go to a man who has dwelt in a city ten or twelve years, and ask him if he is much acquainted with his neighbors, he will very likely say that he scarcely knows one of them. He reads their names on the doors of their houses, but he has never been in to see them, and he does not know them. And benevolence is as much a stranger in a man's mind, as a man is in the city where he dwells. There is a good deal of it, but it does not get around much. It stays at home for the most part, and does not become acquainted with its neighbors. It does not act as a leaven. There seems to be a good deal of misunderstanding or coldness between benevolence and conscience. If a man is conscientious, how seldom do you find that conscience and benevolence blend so intimately that you can scarcely distinguish between them! But there is no such thing as a true benevolence without a conscience in it; and there is no such thing as a true conscience without a benevolence in it. In the ideal man, the higher faculties are blended and harmonious; so that the love of approbation carries with it conscience, and benevolence and beauty; so that every faculty which acts carries the quality of interaction with all the other faculties. Something of everything should be in each specific act throughout the mind. But how seldom do we find this even among the best men! And as men's natures seldom interact in this free way; their natures seldom act jointly. You cannot very well act with your hand and not carry every one of the five fingers with it. In ordinary work, where a part of a man's hand is employed, the whole is employed. You cannot with the grip of your thumb and finger exert the force which you can with your whole hand. There is a power to smite in the clenched fist which there is not in the open hand. And there is a power in the faculties combined which there is not in the faculties separated. But there are few men in any of the walks of life who know how to throw their whole combined nature into their course

of life. There are few men that, as traders, or artists, or students, or speakers, or poets, represent the whole of human nature. They represent one or two faculties, because the faculties are accustomed to act in this way, and the harmony of the whole is not known.

Nay, when men see combined action, or feeble attempts at it, that which aspires to a true concord strikes them as discord. You must touch every instinct in a man before he will discourse in such a way that truth shall round itself out by the force of all the faculties—of the basilar instincts, of the social powers, of the intellect, and of the moral sentiments. Let there be unity in all these elements, and how few men would think, "Why, that is religion"! They have been so accustomed to regard religion as merely the plying together of two or three special faculties, that when they see the whole soul combined and exerting its power, they are struck with the unsacredness of it. The power exerted seems to them a power derived from consentaneous action. And the spectacle of all the faculties working together for one end shocks men as being less than religion. Religion is a very slim, lean, gaunt, poor, ill-fed thing, as it is ordinarily conceived of in this world.

I need not follow out this analysis, or synthesis, any further. If it be true that good men will not bear inspection in the number of their good qualities, or in the quality and harmony of their excellencies, who can say, "I am good"? Who can avoid saying, in the language of our text, when he has done the best that he knows how, "*I am an unprofitable servant*"?

I remark, in view of this discussion,

First. There is a profound ignorance among men in respect to it. Even the knowledge respecting it of the very best men, who have a realizing sense of their weakness and of their sinfulness, is but superficial. Men know something about it; but I think there are very few men who have, even judged from a human stand-point (I will not say enlightened by the revelation of the law of God), from the stand-point of natural science, any adequate conception of their feebleness, or their poverty. Their conception of character is low. And if this is so in regard to the best men, what must it be in regard to the worst?

Therefore it is that conviction of sin is not a thing unnatural. Many men suppose conviction of sin to be something artificial, foisted upon man. They suppose it to be the result of over-stimulation. But if the line of thought this morning be true, nothing is more natural than that men, measuring themselves in this way, should come at last to such a sense of their deficiency in things good and their positive fault in all other respects, as to be filled

with a sense of their degradation, their poverty, their utter necessity. And if they come to this conviction, how natural it is that they should depreciate themselves, that they should loathe themselves, and that they should repent in dust and ashes!

How are the Gospel injunctions toward humility scientifically confirmed when you come to look at any man in the light of the truth which we have held up this morning! And I cannot but think that the tendencies of natural science in our day are directly away from what they should be in this respect; that men who are running after natural science, are running away from the wisdom of their soul toward the wisdom of the senses, and putting emphasis upon mere knowledge, upon the intellect—which is the old Greek partialism—and are leaving out the realm of emotion, quality, harmony, in short, character. With the progress of science there is setting in more self-content, more self-conceit, less self-abasement, and so, with a show of power, great weakness.

Second: If the views which I have presented are correct, you see, now, why it is that the doctrine of perfection, as it has been held by different sectaries, is so unwise. It is generally assumed that a man is perfect when he keeps God's law—that is to say, when he does not forget God's law. If a man's will is perfectly resigned to God's law, it is supposed that that constitutes perfection. But how shallow is such a conception! As if all that is meant by the expressions, *largeness of nature*, *fullness of faculty*, and *harmony of soul*, had been attained by any man! Or, as if anything less than this was worthy of being called perfect!

Is an apple perfect because it has not a worm in it? It may be small, it may be sour, it may be half ripe, it may be fit for nothing to keep or to eat, and yet have no positive blemish.

A man may have no outbreaking sin, and he may have a certain sort of conscience, so that he is willing to keep the external law; but what man is there who, if he considers that God's law is in him and in his faculties, has not a large sense of their symmetry and potency? And yet, what man would presume to say, "I am perfect"? It is utterly irreconcilable with the laws of life and growth. And men impose upon themselves by words—even good men do—when they assume that they are perfect. No man is perfect in the sense in which we ought to use the term *perfection*, nor will any man ever be.

Third: We see why, even in the best and noblest men, salvation will be by grace. We see why it is that no man can rise before God and the heavenly host and lay claim to aught. It is for the simple reason that there is no man who in any single faculty has not

come short an infinite number of times. If you apply to a man's character and conduct all the tests which we have considered this morning, there is no man who in any one direction can stand before God, saying, "I have fulfilled duty; I have reached the utmost bound that it was possible for me to reach." In all respects we are deficient. One part of infirmities we may call deficiencies; but we must call another part of them sins, having in them the principle of voluntariness. And when a man shall rise before God, there will be nothing in all his life which he can hold up, saying, "Because I am just and true and beautiful and symmetrical and fair, therefore take me." No; at the very best, when we stand before God, it will be, not what is good in us, but the abundance of goodness that is in him, which will insure our salvation. Grace is the action of a being from motives of goodness in himself toward those who are inferior to him. It is not founded on desert. It is the bounty and kindness of a great nature toward a lower and ill-deserving nature. God saves all men that are saved, by his grace.

Out of this vivid sense of deficiency and weakness and wickedness, there ought to spring up, in every true Christian heart, an aspiration without end. Contentment in one sense we ought to have. Contentment with the allotments of God's providence, contentment with each day as a stage of our existence, is lawful; but contentment as applied to character is criminal. And no man should have such a contented sense of his attainments, or of his moral excellencies, that he should rest quiet for an hour. Aspiration is indispensable to our Christian experience.

Again: There ought, also, to be the apprehension and the appropriation of Christ, as the one Perfectness, useful, and available by every human being that will. All our life through we have special need of our great Counterpart. Over against every weakness we ought to feel that there is One in our family that, by his excellence makes up for that weakness. Over against every great want there ought to be the consciousness that there is One who makes up for that want. This One is Christ, who is not simply the Saviour of men, but who has identified himself in such a way with men, that each man can take Christ into himself, as it were, and say, "What I have not is here in my Brother, my Friend, my Saviour. I am one with him. His excellence stands over against my want and imperfectness. It is the grace of God that makes me what I am." It is impossible to describe this subtle experience; but there is not a true Christian here who does not know without description, that there may be such intimacy with Christ that his eternal excellence shall become ours. There is not a transfer of moral qualities; but there

is a consciousness that we have of employing for our own development and moral life all those higher elements which are so deficient in us.

Lastly: Out of this sense of imperfectness comes, not sorrow altogether, but much joy. Paul rejoiced that when he was emptied he was filled. Carry a stone that is not hollowed out to the fountain, and it holds no water. Hollow it out, and it becomes a vase in which to carry away the treasure of the spring. When we go to God it is our emptiness that is our blessing. It is our deficiency that is our advantage. As he that goes to the physician takes hold upon him by the disease, by the fracture, or by the organic lesion; so when we go to God, we do not touch the Divine Orb by symmetry, nor by sympathy, but by our want. And when we are weak, we become strong; when empty, filled. When sinful, perfected by his righteousness. As this life is only a part of existence, life as a perspective is opened up to every one of us. As we come to have a consciousness of our feebleness and partialism, there is a growing apprehension of a land where character shall be filled out and wrong righted, and where that which is only sketched here shall be developed and perfected. Thus we are enabled to learn something of the heavenly state. And in proportion as men deal with themselves in high spiritual ways, the conception of heaven becomes vivid. Those who are low in earthly cares have but a faint conception of the heavenly rest; but those who strive for a full and perfect manhood on earth have the clearest conception of that rest which belongeth to the people of God.

Brethren, have you lived in a suitable humility, when you come to consider what you are; how poorly you are made up; how imperfectly you are educated; how vulgar you are in many respects? When you see how little you have of symmetry, how little of power, how little of that which constitutes an ideal manhood, as men conceive of it, and still less as God thinks of manhood, are you living in a suitable state of humility? Do you lay your hand upon your mouth, and your mouth in the dust, every day, and say, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner;" or, do you wrap your righteousness about you, and say, "I am not blind—I see; I am not hungry—I am filled; I am not naked—I am clothed as with kings' apparel"? Woe be to those dwellers upon earth who think they need nothing. Blessed are the poor in spirit. When we are consciously poor and needy we are in the most salvable condition. If God should deal with penalties, and justice should be the scepter, we deserve, every one of us, to be cast out, as uncongenial, unsymmetrical, unsympathizing with the divine nature. But, blessed be God, he deals as

a father. He forgives, he spares, he helps, he will save. And how little should we who are the objects of his constant benefaction, we who are his perpetual beneficiaries—how little should we any more walk with lordly pride! How should we cease to be filled with self-conceit! How utterly are these qualities aside from our true condition!

Let us bow down our heads, then, every day stimulating ourselves for a better performance of known duty, and a larger development of the Spirit of God. Let us say, every day, "I have done only that which I saw, and that in the most imperfect manner; and I am an unprofitable servant."

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

In the midst of our weakness, and out of all our troubles, we look to thee, O Lord God of our salvation: for our sufficiency is of thee, and not of ourselves. We are not only surrounded by enemies and causes of mischief innumerable, but we are inwardly wicked. Nor has one of us the source of life in his own hand. We cannot control our breath; and this curious and wonderful machinery of our nature we cannot ourselves understand nor maintain in its integrity. All the causes of life, and of health, and of prosperity, move higher than our reach, and but the ends of them are let down to us. Far above all human thought, far within, beyond the reach of man's inquisitiveness, thou art; and thou art the Author, as thou shalt be the Finisher of all things. In thee all things do live. Thy wisdom, and not their own except as it is reflected from thee, does guide them. It is thy power that gives law its ministration. It is thy providence that makes all things work harmoniously. It is from thee that recovery comes, so that when we have transgressed thy laws we still find our way back again. All things are of thee, and in thee; and in the last great day all things shall be to thee, to thine honor and glory. Accept our hearts' gladness, and our thanksgiving, that in thee thus we do live and move and have our being. Our ignorance is such, our temptableness is such, our weakness to resist and our strength to do wrong are such, we are so blinded by past transgressions, and by habits, that if we were left to our own saving, not one of us would find the way of peace. It is thy paternal and redeeming love, it is thy grace in forgiveness, in which we have hope—and in that only.

O Lord our God, we commit ourselves to thee as children to a parent. We commit ourselves to thee with much experience of our own waywardness. We have tried to govern ourselves. We have tried to overcome easily besetting sins. We have tried to resist the evil that meets us on every hand. We have tried, in the midst of this warfare of life, to establish in ourselves, in comely proportions, the ideal of a true manhood, so that we shall be in harmony with ourselves, with our fellow men, with the world that now is, and with the world that is to come. And it is too much for us. Even to conceive of the greatness of this problem of life is more than we can do. And to accomplish in ourselves all that which is made possible; to round out and fill up with virtue and piety all the elements of our being; to carry our-

selves from day to day full-clothed with the power of goodness—we know not how. Everything is our enemy. Everything breaks in to provoke us, and to stir pride unduly. Everything is weakening in us the power of conscience, or attempting so to do; and goodness is as the morning cloud and the early dew. From day to day we see the better way, and are pursuing the worse. The good that we would do we do not, and the evil that we would not, behold, it is upon us. And our hope is no longer in our constancy, nor in any part of ourselves. We are not wise to be pilots and guide ourselves through this bestormed channel. We look to thee. Thou must be Leader, Pilot, or there will be shipwreck, fatal and forever.

O Lord God, we come to thee with all the earnestness and desire of our souls, and all the meaning of immortality before us, and all the hope of perfect men in Christ Jesus, and all the vision of the blessedness and joy in the better land, with all yearnings and aspirations; and with all our souls we beseech of thee that, as in days past, so in the days to come, only more abundantly, thou wilt guide us. Pardoning, wilt thou inspire us; and inspiring, wilt thou direct. And wilt thou accomplish in us that which our halting steps and feeble hands in this work will never do. May we live in thee, remembering thy providence, and knowing that all things shall work together for good. May we, in the midst of despondency and shame and remorse and discouragement, still remember that thou didst go down to death through darkness and suffering and pain, to succor those that are in darkness and pain and death; and may we lift up our eyes to the throne of mercy. May we remember that our God is the present help in time of need. May we remember that thine hand is not reluctantly reached forth. Nor is it ever empty. It is fuller by that which it spares than by that which it keeps. May we remember that thy name is, *Him that does exceedingly abundantly more than we can ask or think.*

O that we might come to the throne of grace in time of need, and receive sympathy and succor and salvation! Grant that every wandering soul in thy presence may this morning feel that he is with God. May every soul that has forgotten his Father's house, may every child that has gone astray and forsaken the God of his youth, this morning hear, with the soul, thy silent voice calling him back. O that there might be many footsteps taken again toward the threshold of prayer to-day! O that those private feelings which rise in many bosoms might this day be quickened by the Holy Ghost into effectual life! O that thou wouldst stir up the consciences of those who are dead in trespasses and in sins! O that thou wouldst beat down the lofty pride of those whose pride is as a mountain between their souls and thee! O that thou wouldst sicken many a one of the sweets of wickedness, and make men feel to-day how little there is in them, and how little is in all this life, that can satisfy immortality in the soul! May there be many who shall look away from time to eternity; who shall look away from perishable things to imperishable things; from the body to the spirit.

Grant, we pray thee, that we may hear men asking, What shall we do to be saved? And may they be guided to thee. Higher than the storm, higher than the reach of temptation, higher than sin—there may their thoughts at last rest in the bosom of their God.

Grant, we pray thee, that thy blessing may rest upon all the households that are here represented. Bless the children and the youth. Bless those who are rearing up the young. Strengthen those who are in the midst of life, and are under its keenest pressures and temptations. Draw near to those who are passing from youth into age; and to the old who stand upon their last years. Grant that each one may have the grace that his circumstances and nature and character require. And we beseech of thee that we

may all feel how fast we are going; how we are leaving swiftly behind us the things which are most dear to the natural man; how we are seeing our years emptied of their strength. O that we may look forward, and inquire what is before us. And may we all of us count things to be most our treasure which shall endure the test of death, and the face of God, and the ordeal of the judgment. Grant that we may so live that when we are passing from this life, the spirit within shall be mighty, and shall live again and forever in the light of God, in the love of Christ, in the sympathy of holiness. In the power of all that is true and noble in thee may our souls find their life. And may we draw near to thee not as men from out of the wilderness unknown; may we draw near, not to escape into heaven as by fire; may we draw near to find the gates wide open, and the throng coming forth, cheering us and comforting us, and multitudes taking us by the hand in great joy, and bearing us up to the throne of the Father. And there we will cast our crowns before thee, shouting, Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name, be the praise of our salvation, forever and ever. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we beseech of thee that thou wilt look in mercy upon us, as thou must, or we must perish. When we look at ourselves, and see what is our nature, and what are all its parts, and what are its results and bounds in life, we are almost in doubt of thee, of heaven, and of ourselves; and we are afraid to trust. We fear lest God should cast such unprofitable servants away, and have no more to do with them. And yet, thine infinite grace, thfne infinite tenderness, looks upon us with compassion. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. Grant that thy goodness may lead us to repentance. May we not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

And now, we pray that we may go home carrying with us the sacred truths of the sanctuary, that we may profit withal. Lead us through all the way of life. And when at last we lay aside these bodies, with their imperfections, and the world with its temptations, give us an exceeding abundant entrance into the kingdom of thy glory.

We ask it for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

ROCKWOOD'S

NEW PHOTOGRAPHIC AND ART GALLERY,

845 BROADWAY, NEW YORK.

The Public are respectfully invited to pay a visit of inspection to our new and extensive Photographic Establishment, some of the advantages of which we beg leave to enumerate: AN ELEGANT RECEPTION ROOM, approached by *one easy stair-case* from Broadway. SEPARATE SKY-LIGHTS; hence no vexatious delays to sitters. A NEW NORTH LIGHT for our "STUDIO EFFECTS." INSTANTANEOUS SOUTH LIGHT FOR CHILDREN.

The above, with other novelties, unite to make a complete and convenient Photographic Gallery.

CEO. C. ROCKWOOD,

845 Broadway.

SPECIALTY: Copies of Old Pictures.—Are you aware that a *Carte de Visite Photograph can be successfully copied to a Life-Sized Portrait?* Many persons possess, in old, fading Daguerreotypes, &c., valued likenesses of deceased or absent friends. These pictures can be successfully copied to **life size,** and made permanent by Photography. To this branch of our art we have given the most conscientious and careful attention, knowing that a successful picture is beyond all price, and that a bad picture is the most valueless of all poor property.

☞ *Card Photographs of Mr. Beecher, by mail, 25 cts.*

FROM AUCTION.— Ladies' Solid Gold Leontine Chains, $14 each—usual price, $22. Opera's, $35—usual price, $60. Goods sent C. O. D.; privilege to examine.

F. J. NASH,
712 Broadway.

"Worthy of the fullest confidence."—*Christian Advocate.*

"All that Mr. Nash says may be depended upon."—*Christian at Work.*

"Certainly cheap, and the quality reliable."—*Christian Intelligencer.*

COLTON

Dental Association

Originated the Anæsthetic use of nitrous oxid gas, administer it by means of a very simple, yet nicely contrived valve mouth-piece—do nothing but Extract Teeth, and do it Without Pain. So 40,000 patients testify. See their names at the Office, 19 Cooper Institute.

NEW AND GOOD BOOKS

MINES AND MINING of the Rocky Mountains, the Inland Basin, and the Pacific Slope; Comprising Treatises on Mining Law Mineral Deposits, Machinery and Metallurgical Processes. By ROSSITER W. RAYMOND, Ph.D. 800 pages 8vo, extra cloth. Price, $4.50. 1871.)

THE TROTTING-HORSE OF AMERICA How to Train and Drive him. With Reminiscences of the Trotting Turf. By HIRAM WOODRUFF. 12mo, 412 pp. With steel-plate portrait. Ex. cloth, $2.25; half calf, $4.

PRINCIPLES OF DOMESTIC SCIENCE. By CATHARINE E. BEECHER and HARRIET BEECHER STOWE. 12mo, 390 pages; profusely illustrated. Price, $2.

CHRISTIAN HEART-SONGS. A Collection of Chorusses, Quartets, and Set Pieces, etc. By JOHN ZUNDEL. 8vo, 160 pp. Boards $1; cloth, $1.25.

LECTURE-ROOM TALKS. By HENRY WARD BEECHER. 12mo, extra cloth, with steel portrait. Price, $2.

OUR SEVEN CHURCHES. Eight Lectures by THOMAS K. BEECHER. 16mo. Paper, 50 cents; extra cloth, $1; cloth gilt, $1.25.

H. W. BEECHER'S SERMONS. First, Second, Third, and Fourth Series, uniformly bound. Octavo vols., about 450 pp. each. Single volumes, each complete, $2 50.

☞ The above books for sale by all Booksellers, or sent free by mail, on receipt of price.

J. B. FORD & CO., Publishers,
27 Park Place, N. Y

ELASTIC SPONGE.

CHURCH CUSHIONS,

MATTRESSES, PILLOWS, &c., &c,

Adopted by over 200 Churches.

The most Durable, Economical, and Cleanest.

NO PACKINC---NO MOTHS---NO DUST.

Price List and Samples of Cushions sent free on application to

WM. R. HORTON & SON,

Successors to AMERICAN PATENT SPONGE COMPANY,

Opp. St. Nicholas Hotel, **524 Broadway, New York.**

SOMETHING NEW

FROM WALTHAM.

A BOY'S WATCH

That will Suit Every One.

This Watch, which is of a smaller size than the other Waltham Watches, has just been introduced, and although called the Boy's Watch on account of its size, is destined to have wide and universal sale.

It is finely finished, of substantial construction, and contains all the recent improvements. Its low price and neat appearance will commend it to a large class of persons who have been deterred from purchasing Waltham Watches heretofore on account of their large size.

Our Illustrated Price-List describes this and all other Waltham Watches in detail, gives weight and quality of the cases, with prices of each, and explains our plan of sending watches to all parts of the country without risk to the purchaser.

Send for the Price-List, and state that you saw this notice in the *Plymouth Pulpit*.

HOWARD & CO.,
865 Broadway, New York.

Since February 1st, we have made considerable reductions in the price of all these Waches. All orders received after this date will be filled at the reduced prices.

Application for Advertisements should be made to HENRY BARTLETT, No. 27 Park Place, New Office of the CHRISTIAN UNION.